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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/21/2018  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [AL](#)  
SUBJECT: ALBANIA: IN WAKE OF EXPLOSION, PRESIDENT TOPI  
EMPHASIZES NATO AND CONTINUING WITH WEAPONS DESTRUCTION

REF: A. STATE 28947

[B](#). TIRANA 213  
[C](#). TIRANA 212  
[D](#). TIRANA 199

Classified By: Ambassador John L. Withers II, Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

[1](#). (C) Ambassador met President Topi on March 21 to deliver the President's condolence letter (Ref A). Topi was touched by the letter and noted in particular the last paragraph emphasizing Albania's good record on ridding itself of excess munitions and the importance of pressing forward with destruction. Topi agreed and underscored the importance of the long and successful partnership between the U.S. and Albania, in particular on munitions destruction. We cannot let one illicit partnership undermine the history of successful partnerships, he emphasized. Topi said he had urged Prime Minister Berisha to forget the political infighting and concentrate on the victims in the wake of the tragedy.

[2](#). (C) Ambassador replied that the U.S. would remain committed to helping Albania with munitions destruction. He reiterated the message he had delivered to the PM and to opposition leaders (Refs B, C). We support democracy in action, and the outcry in the wake of the disaster is one sign of a healthy democracy. Nonetheless, Albania's leaders must think of themselves at the NATO table, with the same rights and responsibilities as all other members. The government should not be paralyzed. This is not the time for boycotts and walk-outs. This is the time to come together before tragedy, not to collapse under it.

[3](#). (SBU) Topi went from his meeting with Ambassador to a gathering of the National Security Council. He promised the Ambassador that his opening remarks, which are public, would reflect the need for the country to remain united behind NATO. Indeed, Topi followed through, saying, "It would be unpardonable to allow the historic process of our country's Euro-Atlantic integration to be compromised by the irresponsibility or illegal activity of any individual, whoever it might be, of any corrupt official, or anyone working against the national interests of Albania and the Albanians. We must demonstrate to the international opinion that Albania deserves NATO and Euro-Atlantic integration."  
WITHERS